

Minutes of Homeowners Association Meeting

October 2, 2008

Senior Center of York

In Attendance:

Brandywine, Breezy Point, Chischiak Watch, Coventry, Felgate Woods, Foxwood, Gables of York County, Grafton Woods, Grand Oaks, Kiln Creek, Lakeside Forest, McDonald Bluffs, Middletown Farms, Quartermarsh Estates II (Section 3), Queens Lake, Rainbrook Villas, Running Man, Shady Banks, Tabb Lakes, Victory Industrial Park, Winders Pond, Woodlake Crossing, Wythe Creek Farms

Introduction by County Administrator, James McReynolds:

Mr. McReynolds welcomed those in attendance and introduced the new Public Information Officer, Christie Phillips. He then thanked Colette Johnston and Lynne McMullen for setting up the meeting and went on to introduce the speakers for the evening:

first, Vaughn Poller – Voter Registrar – would speak briefly about foreclosure prevention; next, Kevin Smith – Library – would speak about library services for the blind and vision impaired; and finally, Mr. McReynolds would speak about the Neighborhood of the Year Awards, followed by questions and answers.

Presentation by Vaughn Poller, Housing Division Manager:

Mr. Poller spoke about how the York County Division of Housing and Neighborhood Revitalization encourages anyone at risk of having their home foreclosed upon to act as early as possible to avoid foreclosure. Persons in this situation should communicate with their mortgager and seek help. This is best done by contacting a Certified Foreclosure counselor like those recommended by the York Division of Housing. There are two organizations on the Peninsula that provide this service free to the public and they are Peninsula Catholic Charities and the James City County Office of Housing and Community Development. The public can also find other vetted resources by going to <http://www.virginiaforeclosureprevention.com/>. York Housing is referring citizens at this time, but staff is undertaking training so that we can provide the same service within the County in the future.

Questions from the attendees regarding foreclosure counseling referral included:

- **Who can we contact if we see a neighbor having difficulties?** Call Vaughn Poller on (757) 890 3885 or email vaughn.poller@yorkcounty.gov.
- **In regards to relative areas of responsibility of ownership, are the rules for condominium owners' associations any different to houses?** Condo rules are very specific and you should contact the DPOR (Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation) in Richmond on (804) 367 8500. Information is also available at www.dpor.virginia.gov.
- **When will York County be qualified to provide these counseling services?** In about a year from now. In the meantime, we will recommend other organizations on the Peninsula who are currently qualified to provide this service. Contact the Housing Division on (757) 890 3885 for further information.
- **Does the County currently have a program to monitor and clean up properties in foreclosure to keep the property values up?** The Housing Division currently tracks those properties that are going into foreclosure. The Building Codes and Environmental Development Services staff spends a lot of time out in the field and they keep track of the physical side of that.

- **In the event that the County cuts the grass on a foreclosed property, as there is no one to charge, would you put a lien against the property?** The code applies to foreclosure properties the same way it does to properties that are not in foreclosure. The County would still enforce that code, and if the property owner is absentee then we would have the grass mowed by our contractor and place the lien, but how effective that would be in collection is a different story. The taxes, of course would come first regardless of the state of the property.
- **If we see that a house has become vacant and the grass is growing, should we contact York County?** First, do the neighborly thing and knock on the door and see if someone is there, because it could be that the occupant is unable to cut their grass for some reason. But if you find that the property is abandoned, call Vaughn Poller on (757) 890 3885 so that the County can keep track of it.
- **Don't the banks have a vested interest in keeping the property in some decent shape for future sale?** Yes, although a lot of our local/regional banks are not in the same situation as the big banks you hear about on the news, they are much more stable.

Presentation by Kevin Smith, Library: Kevin informed that the Sub-Regional Library for the Blind in Newport News has closed and that the services they provided are now being handled by the Library and Resource Center of the VA Dept. for the Blind and Vision Impaired in Richmond. He also spoke of the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped and of the free services and resources they provide. Finally, he introduced the audience to the resources York County Public Library had to offer vision impaired citizens. For further information and/or referrals, contact the Library on (757) 890 5105 or Kevin Smith on (757) 890-5134.

Questions from the attendees regarding the Library included:

- **Is there a definition of "visually impaired" that allows access to these services?** You should be diagnosed by a medical professional, but if you can't find a physician or an eye doctor you can go to a psychologist or a social worker and failing that, your local librarian can certify you.
- **If someone wants to use the resources, you said that you'd refer them. What does that entail?** We just give them a call. The citizens that were using the Newport News library received letters and all of their information was sent to the Richmond office.
- **Are the resources and the equipment that left Newport News available now in York County or are they in Richmond and users have to go to Richmond to use them?** Nobody has to go to Richmond. Everybody that had equipment in York County kept their equipment and if they need to exchange tapes or get new equipment, they just contact the Richmond office and it is sent to them free through the mail, so none of our citizens experience any disruptions.

Discussion on Neighborhood of the Year Program, James McReynolds: Mr. McReynolds spoke briefly about how the Neighborhood of the Year Awards program was started and how in recent years there have been very few submissions. He asked the representatives if they would like to see the program continue, and if so, how we could go about increasing the number of submissions. Mr. McReynolds then opened the floor for comments and/or suggestions.

Suggestions included:

- Put a committee together to look at trying to even the playing field somewhat. One of the problems is that the housing areas are so varied, for example, some of the newer neighborhoods have common areas and others don't, so the smaller neighborhoods cannot compete at that level.
- Introduce classes for example, small, medium and large and try to put like-areas together.
- Offer a monetary award to encourage people to submit applications. The money would then have to be put back into the community under its relevant category.

The general consensus was that the program should be continued. Mr. McReynolds suggested that the discussion should be continued at the next meeting after representatives have had the opportunity to reflect on the matter and discuss it with their respective associations. The Public Information Office will create a survey and have materials ready for the next meeting.

Discussion on Annual Report, James McReynolds: York County is considering providing the Annual report online rather than mailing one to every home. Copies would also be available from the Libraries and an article would be printed in the Citizen's News regarding the new arrangement. It is estimated that we'd save approximately \$12,000 by doing so. The representatives unanimously agreed that this was a worthwhile endeavor. Mr. McReynolds will discuss the issue with the Board of Supervisors and seek approval to move forward.

Questions submitted in advance included:

- **Why don't York County transfer station trucks have Virginia plates and therefore pay York County vehicle taxes?** York County's waste collection and disposal contracts are with Allied Waste (formally BFI). They are a York County business, possess a County Business License and pay significant property and business taxes to the County. Allied Waste, in turn, subcontracts the trash transfer to landfills with various trucking contractors who may be a business headquartered in another state. There is no provision or County code that requires a County contractor to have its subcontractors licensed or located in York County. For more information contact Environmental Development Services on (757) 890 3750.
- **Does York County offer any programs or is there any funding for drainage (ponds)?** York County offers assistance in assessing BMP (Stormwater Pond) conditions and guidance as to how to maintain a pond. This information can be obtained from <http://www.yorkcounty.gov/stormwater/index.htm>. The County, however, does not offer grants for care or maintenance of stormwater ponds. For more information contact Environmental and Development Services on (757) 890 3752.
- **Does that include only man made retention ponds that were created for particular housing developments or does it include natural bodies of water?** The program is for man-made facilities. Call EDS drainage on (757) 890-3752 for further information.
- **What is the status on the construction activities on Rt. 17 from Victory Blvd, North to Denbigh Blvd?** The project is still in the right-of-way acquisition phase. Utility relocation work, including undergrounding along most of the project length will be the first sign of construction. The construction phase of the project is still scheduled to begin sometime in FY 2011 according to VDOT's funding allocation plan. The total project cost is now estimated to be \$56.5 million.
- **What is the status on the Stormwater Drainage Project which includes Brandywine?** Brandywine phase I has been bid and the contract awarded. Construction should start in the next two weeks. Phases II and III are designed and are awaiting construction of phase I.

Other questions from the floor included:

- **When can we expect the new library?** A number of things have changed relative to what was supposed to be happening at the Marquis development. These variables will have to be considered before the Board of Supervisors decide whether or not to move forward with the project. There will also be an opportunity for public input. At this stage, we're not sure when that will be.
- **What is the price tag estimate for another Library?** Around \$4 million.
- **So, you want to spend \$4 million, but yet you undercut the school budget by \$1 million?** The school budget was not cut, it was actually increased by \$2.8 million from year to year. It wasn't what they requested, but this is not considered a budget cut.
- **Will those estimates increase the longer it takes to get things going and will it affect the overall decision of the County?** It certainly could, but we are currently getting some very favorable bids on school projects and we'll be reducing the amount we're planning to spend because they are coming in below our estimates right now.
- **What was the estimated operating yearly cost and what does that include?** The entire program is estimated to cost \$750,000 to \$800,000 per year. That includes salaries, benefits, books, materials, heating, lighting, i.e. the entire budget.

- **Where does the County stand as far as the credit market?** We've had no difficulty. Under Virginia law we have to have instruments that are very liquid. Virginia is a very conservative state when it comes to banking practices. As far as the County's ability to issue credit, we shouldn't be impacted. As a matter of fact we may be in a very favorable position. We have been in touch with the moderating agencies, and do not believe that we're in any danger of having our paper downgraded. We may even be in a position for an upgrade. So as far as the County's liquidity and our credit rating goes, we shouldn't have any problems.
- **New developments up and down Rt. 17 seem to have has slowed down. Is this due to the credit crunch?** Some of it probably is due to the credit crunch, just like the Marquis was affected. There were some issues with a developer, but it was also due to credit-type problems. Commercial construction is cyclical just like the rest of the economy and a lot of it is probably due to the downturn.
- **Is the old 711/Papa Johns moving forward? What is the timeline?** Yes. The old 711/Papa Johns and the wing of the Heritage Square Shopping Center that is perpendicular to Rt. 17 are supposed to be coming out. We are unsure of the timeline.
- **What is the latest on the athletic field?** The project is on target and anticipated to open in April of 2009. Some of the fields are already seeded, sprigged and sodded. Most of the curb and gutter is in. Some of the fencing and a lot of the lighting is in. The paving hasn't been done yet, but there may be one out of the 13 fields that is not ready for play.
- **How can the athletic field be accessed?** You can enter and exit from Wendy's, but you can only exit right onto Oriana Rd as it's a right out only towards Rt. 17.
- **Will there be a left hand turning lane if you're headed North on Rt. 17?** Yes. The northbound Route 17 left turn lane that will serve the Sports Complex currently has about 90 feet of storage and 75 feet of taper. When Route 17 is widened, the turning lane will be lengthened to 200 feet of storage and 200 feet of taper. The Route 17 project is scheduled to be advertised for construction in FY 2011.
- **What is the timeline on that intersection being completed?** Our contract states that it will be completed in six months and the contractors have assured us that this will be met.
- **Is the coordination of traffic on Rt. 17 going to be revisited?** This is a VDOT issue which York County revisits frequently.
- **Is there a welcome package available for new York County residents?** Yes. Contact the Public Information Office on (757) 890 3300.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:00 p.m.